

## [W. M. Dickson]

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Range-lore

Ruby Mosley

San Angelo, Texas.

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### RANGE-LORE

Mr. W. M. Dickson and Mrs. Sarah Foreman Dickson, came to Texas in 1836. Mr. Dickson fought in the Civil and Mexican Wars. The couple finally settled at Kerrville, Texas, where Mr. John Dickson was born. In 1882 the Dickson family moved to San Angelo and this has been their home ever since.

"We had some mighty tough times," says Mr. J. H. Dickson.

"When I was a little boy 9 years of age we lived near Weatherford, Texas. An old man and two boys who lived near old Fort Belknap carried a bunch of horses to East Texas to sell. The boys rode horses and drove the bunch while the old man went on in the little chuck wagon. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 They made the trip there and sold all but about six horses that they started back with. When they came back through Weatherford the old man bought a new trunk and filled it with new clothes for his wife and three children; as he left the store he told Mr. Broady, the store keeper, that he would put the remainder of the money in a belt around his waist as the nights were light and one can never tell what might happen. The three traveled on to Salt Creek Prairie and sure enough the Indians came and got their scalps and six horses. Some settlers of that section found the dead men, put some horses to the chuck wagon and carried them to Weatherford to try to identify them.

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Mr. Broady recognized them at first sight, then looked for the money in the man's belt but it was not there. Siden Bly looked in an old boot in the hind end of the wagon first, he pulled out dirty socks, then the bills, last the gold and silver, several hundred dollars that he had sold the horses for. I was at Siden Bly's elbow when he pulled the money out of the boot. The wife and children were brought down for the funeral, and the money was turned over to them.

"When I was a kid 14 years old I worked for Jim, an old forty-niner out of California. He was an old wolf and buffalo hunter. We went several hundred miles on these trips and had some dreadful times dodging arrows and getting food and water. 3 "Sixteen of us left Fort Griffin in December, 1872. We went by the way of three ox wagons. Jim Reed hired one wagon from Uncle John Parrish. He would not hire the wagon to him unless he took us with him. He doubted my ability with a gun until Uncle John said, 'I'll give you my wagon, team, guns, and all, if this 14 year old boy can't out shoot anything you have in your gang.' At this I was hired.

"Well we got on our way and old Jim Reed gave the order. He said, 'Boys we are going out and camp, and poison wolves that herd the buffalo.

There will be great big rascals, old blue loafers and white loafers.' There were no roads; we traveled by compass.

"We came to a creek that made a fine place to camp, about half of the bunch pitched camp here and the others went several hundred yards past. We found seven buffaloes that were down; the wolves had eaten parts of each and one was still alive. We took his heart, cut it up and put poison all over it and the remains of the other buffaloes. The next morning when we got up we had 46 dead wolves. Old Reed came over from their camp bragging about his outfit killing 41 wolves but when we told him about our luck he shut up.

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"About a thousand old loafers would surround the buffaloes and keep them going around and around for a day or so until the buffaloes broke to run for rest, 4 food or water, then the wolves would devour the younger ones.

"We skinned the dead wolves and went on our way. The farther we went the less water holes we found. We saw a fire and went to it but when we got there the Indians had gone. We camped about three hundred yards from the Indians' camp fire and killed wild turkeys and a deer. We ate supper without water. The next morning we woke up with a five inch blanket of snow on us. Boy, we were glad because with the snow melting we had water for our oxens, which we caught in large vessels.

"We went on our way and came to the south prong of the Wichita River and set up camp for three days. Brother and I went out to look for wolves and found some that had been poisoned. We began to skin them. I heard a noise, looked up and said, 'Jesus Christ, yonder comes Indians.'

We made it to a cliff as fast as we could. I pulled off my hat, looked up over the cliff and saw the Indians examining the wolves' remains.

The old fellows at the camp shot their guns and built fires to attract our attention to the camps, as they thought we were lost or killed by Indians. They had had a little skirmish with the same Indians that we had seen. Uncle John was glad to see brother and I come up a-grinning.

"Well, our supplies fell short. We only had about 5 two biscuits a-piece left. Jim Reed and old Rice started to Fort Griffin for supplies when they came to an Indian camp of five tepees. Sixteen Indians faced them and shot an arrow at Reed's head, but missed. Reed spoke to them in Spanish and they yelled, 'Go to hell.' Reed and Rice started off as fast as they could go, with five Indians following. They stopped their wagon and the Indians circled around and around, giving the war cry. Of course Reed shot and killed one of them. Reed

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said, 'I hated to kill the ignorant devil but had too.' We had an awful time while Reed and Rice were gone after our supplies. We fought and hungered for five long weeks; we had no bread and we would boil the buffalo's heart and slice it for bread.

"About fifty Walla-Walla Indians came down from Washington State and captured Harve Ledbetter and kept him about eighteen months. The whites up around Fort Sill traded horses to the Indians for him.

"Frank Jones was an old buffalo hunter as tough as a boot and smart as a whip. I worked for him in 1876-77-78. The Comanche Indians captured him and kept him several years. He learned to shoot the bow and arrow and to speak their language, then he was their interpreter.

They traded him to the Kiawas and he spoke their language and did their trading. He lived with Indians twenty-one years and finally he got to be a trusty. The government took possession of him at Fort Sill when the Indians were placed on reservation. He helped the government to manage them and interpreted for the government.

"Jasper Helem was stolen in Jack County by the Indians and they kept him eleven years; then the Indians came down to Fort McKavett to make a raid on horses and men as well. The Indians bedded down to sleep a while before they did their dirt. Jasper slipped out. This was the first time he had been in a settlement since he was captured. Frank Jones happened to be the interpreter at Fort McKavett at this time. Early that morning Frank was holding the calves off while the cows were being milked. The woman that was milking looked up and screamed, 'Indians are here!' Jasper said, 'Me white man.' Frank began to talk to him in the Indian language and to their amazement both had been captives.

"I worked with both of those old boys about two years and we had lots of fun. They would frame up on me as both could speak Indian. I remember one time when Frank paid \$3.00 for a knife I got it and made belief that he had lost it. Old Jasper told him in Indian

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language that I had his knife and he looked over at me and said, 'John give me my knife!' Of course we had a big laugh at that.

"In 1869 Captain Warren owned a big freight outfit. They hauled for the government. One day they were well 7 loaded and coming through Young County on Salt Creek Prairie, when old Big Tree and Satanka's tribes, which included Frank Jones, made a run in on the wagon train, burned all the wagons and killed nine men. Satanka and Big Tree were captured and were put in a wagon to be taken to prison. They had hand cuffs on and Big Tree cut two fingers off to free himself, then picked up a gun to shoot the driver, when the guard saw him and shot first. Old Chief Satanka was carried to Florida Island and served twenty-five years then was returned to Fort Bill to be released.

There were about fifty squaws and bucks in their bunch.

"The Indians stole Cynthia Ann Parker when she was a little girl. They kept her for years and years and she learned the Indian language, customs and habits, and liked them very much, as she knew no others. Cynthia Ann Parker had two boys and one girl, Quahanna, by the Indians.

Frank Jones traded three horses to the Indians for Cynthia Ann and the baby girl. I saw her in Henderson County at Mr. O'Quinn's saw mill.

She made four attempts to get away and go back to the Indians. One time she took her baby girl and was gone four days before we got her back.

She said, 'My happiest days was when I was with my Indian family.'

"In the spring of 1855, my father, W. M. Dickson was a home guard at Kerrville. Old Bill Bowen was a 8 home guard in Atascosa County. The Indians came, to steal whatever they could get away with. They got two women, a boy, and many horses. Bill Bowen and his men set out after the Indians. They traveled by the way of Kerrville, got my dad (W.

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M. Dickson) and his gang, with strong determination to get the women and boy. They followed them all the way to the Big Hubbard Creek, in Shackelford County. Bill said, 'They have seen us, and are out-ridin' us. As our horses are about done, we will circle through and cut in on Big Hubbard.' This creek was widened by a slue of water which grew china trees, sunflowers and tall weeds. Just as they had gotten their horses well hidden, they saw the Indians coming over the hill right in front of them on the other side of the creek. The two women and the boy had been stripped of their clothes and tied to the wild stolen horses. Their feet were tied under the horses' bellies and their hands up around the horses neck and to the mane. They had ridden thirty-six hours in this position with the wild horses running at full speed through the wild country. As they got to Big Hubbard the horses made a dash for water, as neither horse nor man had had a drink of water nor a bite to eat on the way. The Indians roped out the horses that carried the woman and the boy and tied them to a tree. They killed a steer and ate the raw meat, cut hunks out and threw near 9 enough to the captives for them to smell. There were 17 Indians and about 300 horses in the Indians' bunch. Papa and Bill had fourteen men in their gang. While the Indians were ganged around their feast, papa and Bill's gang began firing. They killed and got fourteen scalps of the Indians then went over, released the women and boy, and divided clothes with them. They made up a fire and roasted some of the meat that the Indians left and ate and watered up. In a few hours the women were able to start homeward. They were given the best horses and saddles.

When they got back as far as Mason County they borrowed a hack and carried the women and boy home. Papa (W. M. Dickson) and old Bill Bowens' names went down in history for this act." Range-lore

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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J. H. Dickson, San Angelo, Texas, interviewed January 5, 1938.